

Agricultural Marketing Service
Office of the Deputy Administrator for Marketing Programs
Fruit and Vegetable Programs
Processed Products Branch
Area Office
GS-503-6, Billing and Collection Technician (Office Automation)

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I. INTRODUCTION

This position is located in an Area Office of the Processed Products Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Programs. The Area Office is responsible for carrying out program responsibilities related to the inspection of processed fruits and vegetables and miscellaneous commodities for the assigned geographic area.

The incumbent serves as a Billing and Collection Technician responsible for performing a variety of duties related primarily to the billing, collection and account maintenance functions for the Area Office.

II. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The technician reviews all certificates, along with payroll and billing documents generated by graders. These reports are audited for technical information as well as for accuracy prior to entering into the electronic billing and collection systems: (PLIS, FFIS, BRIO, BIIS and XDB Data Base).

Prepares applications for services by inputting pertinent data into the electronic system.

Reviews, verifies, and reconciles financial related data for all grading certificates.

Receives reports of hours worked from graders in charge of plants under contract and reconciles time sheets as necessary, apportioning charges for graders who work in two or more plants within an accounting period. Other audit items in time charged to applicants, mileage, travel time, per diem charges and accounting data. Based on his or her own knowledge and experience, either independently or by contacting the grader or OIC, the technician initiated immediate corrective action when a discrepancy is noted.

The technician reviews charges from other federal/state agencies on cross-utilization of employees who have performed grading/inspection work under Processed Products authority. These include the F&V Fresh Products Branch, and various state governments. The technician prepares reimbursement billing for such services and billing for transfer of funds when cross-utilization of personnel results in monies owed to the Processed Products Branch. He or she audits and prepares reimbursement to states for work performed by state employees

and initiates correction of any discrepancies prior to preparing final billing and/or collection document.

Examines the accuracy and adequacy of documentation, the compliance with regulations, and the justification of vouchers, invoices, claims, and other requests concerning payment of goods and services provided to or by the Government such as expenditures for travel and transportation.

Receives, disburses, examines, deposits and otherwise processes industry payment, usually in the form of check, and transmits payment to the appropriate lock-box. Is responsible for security of hard copy checks and submission to lock-box. Maintains accurate accounting data for all funds received, determines whether written and numerical amounts agree, and initiates immediate action to correct any difference in amounts billed and received. Performs weekly balancing of internal revenue logs and tracks deposits of funds at the National Finance Center.

Completes fee/charge documents electronically using information from graders worksheets and a rate code table. Assures proper account numbers, subcenter numbers, and mailing addresses prior to submittal to the National Finance Center (NFC). Posts data from these documents and the certificate in the appropriate electronic or handwritten ledgers. Transmits fee/charge documents to the National Finance Center on a weekly basis.

Reviews application ledger on a weekly basis to ensure services have been completed and applicants have been billed. Reviews BRIO reports, debt management reports, detail transaction reports, cost responsibility reports, and various other reports from NFC for discrepancies, errors, or omissions, and follows-up with appropriate correspondence requesting corrections as necessary.

Identifies delinquent accounts using information from NFC. As directed by supervisor, makes phone calls and writes letters to companies/plants to request payment/arrange payment plans. Notifies NFC to move delinquent accounts to claim status.

Participates in maintaining the Plant Information Systems (PLIS) data base. Assures accurate information regarding contract status of plants, surety bond information, amount of surety bond, data of most recent plant survey, etc. Initiates paperwork associated with establishing contracts with plants for grading services, and prepares reports of cancellations or failure to renew contracts, etc.

As required, takes requests for inspection and, as directed, relays requests to graders in the field. May assist OIC or supervisor in scheduling graders for plant or inspection assignments.

Utilizes a microcomputer to prepare and input various accounting records. Utilizes a variety of

software packages, including XDB Data Base for the billings and collections activities, dBase applications for PLIS, Lotus Notes, WORD, WordPerfect, BRIO, EXCEL, FFIS (Foundation Financial Information System), and BIIS (Billing and Inspection Information System).

Adheres to Equal Employment and Civil Rights policies, goals and objectives in performing the duties of this position. Assures that oral and written communications are bias-free and that differences of other employees and clients are respected and valued.

III. FACTORS

1. Knowledge Required by the Position

The work requires in-depth knowledge of account procedure, technical financial management procedures, methods and techniques to perform a wide range of tasks. This includes knowledge of document, terminology, forms and reports, automated and manual file systems, arithmetic used in financial operation to perform or verify calculations, the ability to review and identify missing information, preparation of final copies of documents, and file maintenance. This may include, but are not limited to, knowledge sufficient to enter a range of standard information or adjustments of automated databases and the investigation and resolution of discrepancies. Must have the ability to understand recurring error reports and take corrective actions; create and generate a variety of reports, invoices, and other claims; perform data entry and correction; and monitor accounts.

Must have specific knowledge of the mission, functions, types of services provided, and technical terminology use in the Processed Products Branch necessary to respond to the users of the service, other agencies and field employees.

Knowledge of other AMS program and other Federal agency (e.g., Department of Commerce) billings systems to process cross-utilization/billings documents and maintain associated records, as well as marketing order programs, where appropriate.

Must be able to work with systems personnel to locate and resolve accounting transaction problems in the accounting system.

Is required to have a working knowledge of pay and leave rules, administrative rules, documentation requirements, schedules and deductions.

Must have specific knowledge of grading and inspection programs needed to understand the kinds of grading and inspection services rendered for billing and collections purposes, inter-relationship between graders, private industry, state governments, other federal agencies, NFC, etc.

Ability to establish rapport and conduct oneself in a tactful and diplomatic manner with program

officials, plant employees and others.

Must have a comprehensive knowledge of Processed Products Branch accounting and billing procedures to review certificates, various administrative charges, state reimbursements, and laboratory charges in order to complete assignments in the program area. This knowledge is also required in order to research and resolve billing problems.

A comprehensive knowledge of Agency and Branch regulations is required to keep up-to-date on changes to the program, as well as Agency and Departmental regulations governing travel, pay, and expenses.

Must have specific knowledge of and ability to operate a microcomputer in order to enter, retrieve and manipulate data related to travel vouchers, billing documents, and operating statement.

Must have specific knowledge of and the ability to apply various software packages such as XDB Data Base for the billings and collections activities, dBase applications for PLIS, Lotus Notes, WORD, WordPerfect, EXCEL, BRIO, FFIS (Foundation Financial Information System), and BIIS (Billing and Inspection Information System), electronic mail systems, as well as programs used in wide area and local area network computer system. Must be a qualified typist. Knowledge of grammar, spelling, capitalization, etc., to review and/or prepare correspondence.

2. Supervisory Controls

The employee is under the general supervision of the OIC and receives technical assignments, advice, and guidance from the Administrative Support Assistant (ASA). The OIC and ASA provide assignments in terms of general objectives and instructions and are available for assistance with unusual situations and difficult problems. The incumbent plans and carries out the work independently and handles problems and deviations in accordance with instructions, policies, and previous training or accepted practices. Completed work may be spot-checked for conformance with established policies, procedures and regulatory requirements.

3. Guidelines

Guidelines include USDA, NFC, AMS, MRP and Program fiscal and program-related regulations, manuals, handbooks, and directives associated with the processed fruit and vegetable grading/inspection program. These guidelines include instructions on computing charges to applicants, collections, as well as general administrative procedures. Due to the nature of the assignment, the technician may have to rely on his or her experienced judgment, rather than guides to fill in gaps, identify sources of information, and make working assumptions about what transpired. Situations which require significant interpretation/deviation from the guidelines are referred to the OIC.

4. Complexity

This work involves performing related procedural tasks in processing accounting or other financial management transaction, along with the maintenance of electronic accounts and ledgers for grading and inspection services.

The employee must be thoroughly familiar with billing and collection activities, contract specifications and how it relates to the billings activities, marketing orders, contract preparation and the PLIS system/ BIIS (Billing and Inspection Information System, and related Program procedures. The incumbent must be alert to changes in regulations/procedures and make adjustments accordingly.

Transactions and accounts vary, several tasks and applicable documentation may be fairly standardized, subject to similar treatment, and are recurring in nature, while others will need individual attention and problem solving will be needed to resolve issues. The work requires decisions concerning the interpretation of data, planning of work, or refining methods and techniques. Due to deadlines, work assignments must be prioritized to meet regular deadlines each month. The technician is recognized as an authority on processing transactions.

5. Scope and Effect

The incumbent is expected to identify and correct errors in documents and records, balance billing accounts and follow up on delinquent accounts, prepare reports, and reconcile discrepancies in automated account reports, and prepare other program-related documents and reports.

The purpose of the work is to perform a range of related accounting and financial management clerical or technical tasks, along with facilitating the prompt and accurate reimbursement of rendered grading and inspection services. This assists the local OIC in carrying out the work of the office, and the National Office in projecting, planning, and controlling costs and revenue.

6. Personal Contacts

Contacts are with co-workers and Branch/Program personnel, employees of NFC, Federal and State government personnel, industry representatives and users of the service, and the general public.

7. Purpose of the Contacts

Contacts are for the purpose of receiving instructions, exchanging information, and resolving work related problems.

8. Physical Demands

The work is primarily sedentary, but requires a great deal of concentration. Some physical effort, such as standing, walking, bending, lifting and sitting is required, but there are no special physical demands.

9. Work Environment

The work is performed in an office setting, which involves everyday risks or discomforts.